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Forth Stage/ Translation
Translation of SYNONYMY (الترادف)

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Synonymy is the sameness, or the similarity of meaning between two or more words. Such words are described as synonymous, or synonyms. For example, “big”, “large” and “huge” are synonyms. Usually synonyms are divided into two major types:

1. Absolute synonyms: Words which are perfectly identical in meaning.
2. Near(or close)synonyms: Words which are similar to one another in meaning.

It is a well-established universal fact in the study of meaning, words and language in general that absolute synonyms do not exist in languages or are quite rare, to say the least. The reason is that there is no need for more than one word (or signifier) to describe the same thing or idea (or signified) in a language. However, when two or more words are used to describe the same thing, there must be a difference of some kind between them. The examples used in this section illustrate the reasons for such a difference.

Parallel to that is the fact that near synonyms are commonplace in any language, spoken or written. They are even indispensable to cover all shades of difference within one and the same range of meaning. The main problem for the students is that in most cases they understand all synonymous words as absolute synonyms only. That is, all the English words similar in meaning have the same identical meaning in Arabic. The following is a discussion of four major problems of translating synonymy.

(1) The first problem is the translation of synonyms of emotive charge: eg.

1. “He is angry”: هو غاضب
2. “He is discomfited”: هو ممتعض
3. “He is annoyed”: هو غضبان\مغضب\متضايق

4. "He is disturbed/bothered": هو منزعج
5. "He is inconvenient": هو غير مرتاح
6. "He is agitated": هو مضطرب \ مهتاج \ ساخط
7. "He is furious": هو مغتاظ \ يتميز من الغيظ
8. "He is enraged/outraged": هو مشتت \ غضبا
9. "He is worried": هو قلق \ هو معصب
10. "He is nervous": هو متوتر
11. "He is impatient": هو نافذ الصبر \ نفذ صبره
12. "He is discontented": هو غير راض \ متذمر
13. "He is displeased": هو متكدر \ غير مسرور
14. "He is wrathful/raged": هو متأجج غضبا
15. "He is bothered": هو متنعص
16. "He is exasperated": هو شديد الغضب

Here are sixteen synonyms for one and the same meaning of "anger" (غضب). They are not exhaustive. They form together what is called a "lexical set" or a "lexical field" of anger. We have

sixteen different words in English and fourteen words equivalent to them in Arabic. This can be described as the precision of translation. However, the problem for the students is that it is a hard task for them to find the precise synonymous word in Arabic.

The solution to this problem can be traced in the following discussion: On a grading scale, this lexical set can be divided into three main levels of meaning: ANGRY the middle, A LITTLE ANGRY below, and VERY ANGRY above, as illustrated by the following diagram:

VERY ANGRY

جدا غاضب

ANGRY غاضب

قليلًا غاضب

LITTLE ANGRY

In this scale, “ANGRY” is considered as the central level of meaning, and the other two levels are drawn in comparison to it. Applying this to the whole set of synonyms, we may have the following reclassification under the below (A LITTLE ANGRY) and the above (VERY ANGRY) levels:

A LITTLE ANGRY: nervous, worried, disturbed, discomforted, inconvenient, displeased, discontented, annoyed, bothered.

غاضب قليلاً: متوتر، قلق، منزعج، ممتعض، غير مرتاح، غير مسرور (متكدر) متضايق، غير راض (متذمر)، غاضب (مغضب)

VERY ANGRY: impatient, agitated, enraged, furious, wrathed, exasperated.

غاضب جداً: نافذ الصبر، مضطرب (مهتاج) ساخط، مشتاط غضباً، مغتاط، متأج غضباً، شديد الغضب

When the students find the equivalent word in Arabic for, say, agitated (ساخط), they are giving the most suitable version. However, when they do not find (ساخط) or (مغتاط) or (مشتاط)

(غضباً), they can use the general translation (غاضب جداً) for it or any of the words that come under it.

Similarly, (ممتعض) is the precise Arabic word for „discomforted“. Yet, when the students are -for some reason- unable to find it, they can use the general translation of this level (غاضب)

(قليلًا). Also, (منزعج), (متضايق) or (متنعض) is applicable here.

The important thing for students is to know that the meaning of any word in this lexical family of anger is within the general scope of (غضب) in Arabic. The next stage is to distinguish the level of this emotion, anger. Is it normal? below normal? or above normal? This distinction is required

because „bothered“ (متنغص), for instance, is quite different from „raged“ (متأجج غضبا). That is, a bothered person is normal and controls himself, whereas an outraged person is abnormal, for he does not control himself and loses his senses. That is why a divorce by a raged husband is pardoned in Islam, whereas an inconvenient, discomforted man's divorce is not.

The solution: When the students are unable to make such a distinction, they should resort to the general name of the whole set, i.e. anger (غضب).

Now the students have three solutions ordered in preference:

- 1.To distinguish the precise equivalent word in Arabic.
- 2.To distinguish the general level of the meaning of the word, and translate it into it.
- 3.To translate any word in the same lexical set into the general title name of this set.

It must be stressed that all the students' efforts should concentrate on number one, so that they can achieve precision of translation, which is the ultimate aim of the translator. Yet, when the students are unable -for good reasons- to take up „1“, they can go for „2“ and then for „3“ as their last resort.